(b) and (c) No, Sir, However, a number of projects have been taken up for development of hilly, tribal, underdeveloped and backward areas of the country.

Rail connectivity to Jagdishpur

1296. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Jagdishpur is the second target town in Bhojpur district after Ara in Bihar, where seeds of independence were sown, do not have rail connection;

(b) if so, whether Government is considering for the same after celebrating 150 years of independence war of 1857; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) Jagdishpur in Bhojpur district is not connected by a Railway line. However, Ara-Sasaram New Line, on completion, would provide rail connectivity to serve the people of this area as Jagdishpur is only about 20 km from this line.

Escalators at stations

1297. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has plan to install escalators at Secunderabad, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam railway stations in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so the steps proposed to complete such plans;

(c) whether Railways would provide trolleys for older people and physically challenged people at these stations; and

(d) in what manner Government would help passenger cross long distances at these railway stations alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU):

(a) and (b) Escalators are available at Vijayawada station. Escalators at Secunderabad will get included as part of its development as world class station. There is no proposal to provide escalators at Visakhapatnam station.

(c) and (d) Wheel chairs are available at Vijayawada, Secunderabad and Visakhapatnam station which can be used by older people and physically challenged persons. Such passenger can cross platforms by way of pathways provided at both ends of platforms at these stations. Foot-over-bridge (FOB) with ramp has also been provided for free movement of wheel chair.

Proposal to increase capacity of sleeper coaches

1298. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to increase capacity of 3-Tier sleeper coaches by at least 10 berths by re-designing coaches;

(b) whether it is a fact that safety organizations have objected to this proposal;

(c) what steps would be taken to avoid creating hazardous conditions[1] in railway coaches;

(d) the full details of such plans; and

(e) the plants to encourage a debate on such un-tested ideas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRJ R. VELU): (a) to (e) Action is in hand to enhance the capacity of existing 3-Tier sleeper coaches from 72 to 81 berths, and to manufacture future 3-Tier sleeper coaches to a new design with capacity of 84 berths. The increase in the capacity of existing 3-Tier sleeper coaches is being made by provision of a foldable middle berth in each longitudinal bay, while the future 3-Tier sleeper coaches shall have three extra berths on the transverse side by adjustment of the width of transverse bays besides the provision of longitudinal middle berths. The design and fitment details for the new arrangement for both the existing and the future coaches have been finalized with due consideration to passenger comfort and safety.

Accident on unmanned level crossings

1299. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that unmanned level crossings on the rail system have been taking a good toll of human life every year;

(b) whether Government proposes to address this problem through awareness campaign and other means;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what are the details of rail accidents that had taken place on unmanned level crossings during 2006-07 on the ECoR?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU):

(a) to (c) The number of accidents at unmanned level crossings and resultant loss of human lives in such accidents is a matter of concern for the Indian Railways. Indian Railways have been taking a number of steps including public awareness programmes and publicity campaign to educate road users for observing safe practices while negotiating unmanned level crossings such as quickies on TV, cinema slides, posters, pamphlets, advertisements in newspapers and on local cable network, street plays, talks on radio, counselling the road users through SMS and had also been involving the village Panchayats to address this issue. Joint ambush checks with the involvement of civil authorities to nab the erring road users under the provisions of Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 and the Railways Act, 1989 are also conducted.

In addition, besides providing smooth surface and appropriate gradient at the level crossings, proper road signs to warn road users, speed breakers/rumble strips on the approach road, and whistle boards for the train drivers to whistle while approaching the level crossings are also provided. Further, the level crossings gates are being progresssively manned in a phased manner on their qualifying the prescribed traffic volumes. Zonal Railways have also been delegated adequate powers to consider and sanction Limited Height Sub-ways in lieu of level crossings, wherever feasible, to reduce me number of unmanned level crossings.